

FIVE MILLION DOLLARS IN GOLD BURIED 85 YEARS ON THE FLORIDA COAST NOW SINKS FOREVER BEYOND THE REACH OF MAN

Treacherous Quicksands Have Settled All Question of Ownership to the Glittering Treasure That Lies Hidden In the Marshes Within a Few Miles of the Ruins of

San Marco de Apalachee.

THOUSANDS and thousands of dollars have been spent in the endeavor to locate buried treasure, usually the loot of the famous pirates of a bygone day. The hope that springs eternal is never more responsive than to the lure of buried gold. It is the everlasting human desire to get something for nothing that makes men willing to risk danger and privation in the effort to locate what some other man has hidden.

Most of the stories of hidden treasure are mere myths, traditions without other foundation than suitability. Scattered along the coast from Maine to Florida are innumerable retired coves, inaccessible passages, tiny uninhabited islands that would have been such suitable places for Blackbeard or Captain Kidd, or some other of the great buccaners to have buried their loot that it is not to be wondered at that the tradition that they did so seems to be spontaneously generated from the empty air.

There is one story, however, that seems to be pretty well authenticated, told recently in a Florida paper, of \$5,000,000 in gold buried near St. Marks on the Gulf of Mexico. Hon. H. Clay Crawford, Florida's secretary of state, who has all his life been connected with the office he now holds, and is said to be a veritable mine of interesting information on the history of his State, is quoted as authority for the story. And the \$5,000,000 in gold is supposed to be the \$5,000,000 which Uncle Sam paid Spain for Florida, some eighty-five years ago.

Sinking in the Quicksand

The worst of it is that whoever gets it must get it quick. For it is said that a quicksand is forming about where it is supposed to have lain all these many, many years, and if the quicksand once gets the treasure in its clutches no human power can wrest it away.

Back in 1821, when the flag of Castle and Leon gave place in Florida to the Stars and Stripes, the waters around the great peninsula, both on the Gulf of Mexico and on the Atlantic were fairly infested with pirates. So when the Spanish gunboat carrying the five millions that was paid Spain for Florida was disabled near St. Marks, her captain was naturally afraid that she would fall an easy prey to pirates. So he is supposed to have buried the treasure somewhere near St. Mark's.

History relates that the money was paid in gold from the mint at New Orleans, and loaded on a Spanish gunboat anchored off that city. The captain, knowing that the waters of the gulf fairly swarmed with pirates, did not dare to strike boldly out toward the southern end of Florida, but chose the longer route, hugging the coast all the way, so as to keep, as far as possible, within reach of help in case of attack. One of the fierce storms to which those waters are peculiarly subject sprang up and the gunboat was disabled, when in the neighborhood of St. Mark's.

Buried the Gold in a Marsh

The captain realized that he was practically at the mercy of pirates. He did not doubt that they had means of knowing of the treasure he carried. So he landed with several of his crew and buried the gold, and then returned to his vessel. This drifted helplessly for days. Finally it was picked up by a vessel bound for Peru, and as it seemed impossible to tow the gunboat so far officers and crew were taken off. But their troubles were not yet over, for the ship that rescued them proved to be a plague ship, and the officers and many of the crew died. The few who survived were finally landed, penniless, in Peru, and made their way to their homes as best they could.

Forty years later there landed at St. Marks a sailor named Bell; old he was and poor, feeble and nigh unto death. To him there came as a good Samaritan, one Smith, who took him into his home and cared kindly for the old man. For months he lingered, growing weaker and weaker, fighting bravely against the inevitable. But exposure and want had done their work and finally he

died. When, however, he realized that his time had indeed come, he told Mr. Smith the story of his life, and how for more than forty years he had been chasing rainbow gold.

Told Secret on Death Bed

He was one of the crew of the ill-fated gunboat that carried the Spanish gold from New Orleans. He told of the burying of the money after the boat became disabled, and of the crew being carried to Peru. He said he had spent his life trying to get back to St. Marks, where the gold was buried. Before he died he gave Mr. Smith a chart by which the spot could be located, then he died and was buried at St. Marks.

It was in the last year of the war that old Bell died. The troubled period of reconstruction followed, and it was some time before Smith could take up the quest which the old sailor had bequeathed to him. Eventually, however, he set out in a small sailboat to search for the buried treasure. The chart which Bell had left him described three trees which grew in a certain spot on the shore. Into one of them a spike had been driven, whereby the captain might locate his treasure when he came again.

Smith made a careful inspection of the coast and believed that he had located the exact spot where the treasure had been buried. Smith found what he believed to be the three trees mentioned in the chart but the iron spike was nowhere to be seen. On one of them, however, was a peculiar knot.

He cut into this and found an iron spike driven into the tree, over which the knot had grown.

Found the Hiding Place

Following instructions in the chart he measured off a certain distance and here began to dig for the gold. He had left the negroes with the boat at a safe distance to avoid sharing the secret with them. He was equipped with only a hoe and a spade, and besides was an old man, and encountered much difficulty in the work. He decided to return home and get better equipped and assistance, believing firmly that the treasure was buried there and intending to return and dig for it.

But he had no money. He had been a man of substance in his day, but the closing of the war and the freeing of the slaves had left him poor. He had not the means to carry on the search just then. But he fully expected to take it up again some day. Living in the hope that he would yet find that gold, and believing firmly that it was buried near the tree with the spike in it, Smith also died.



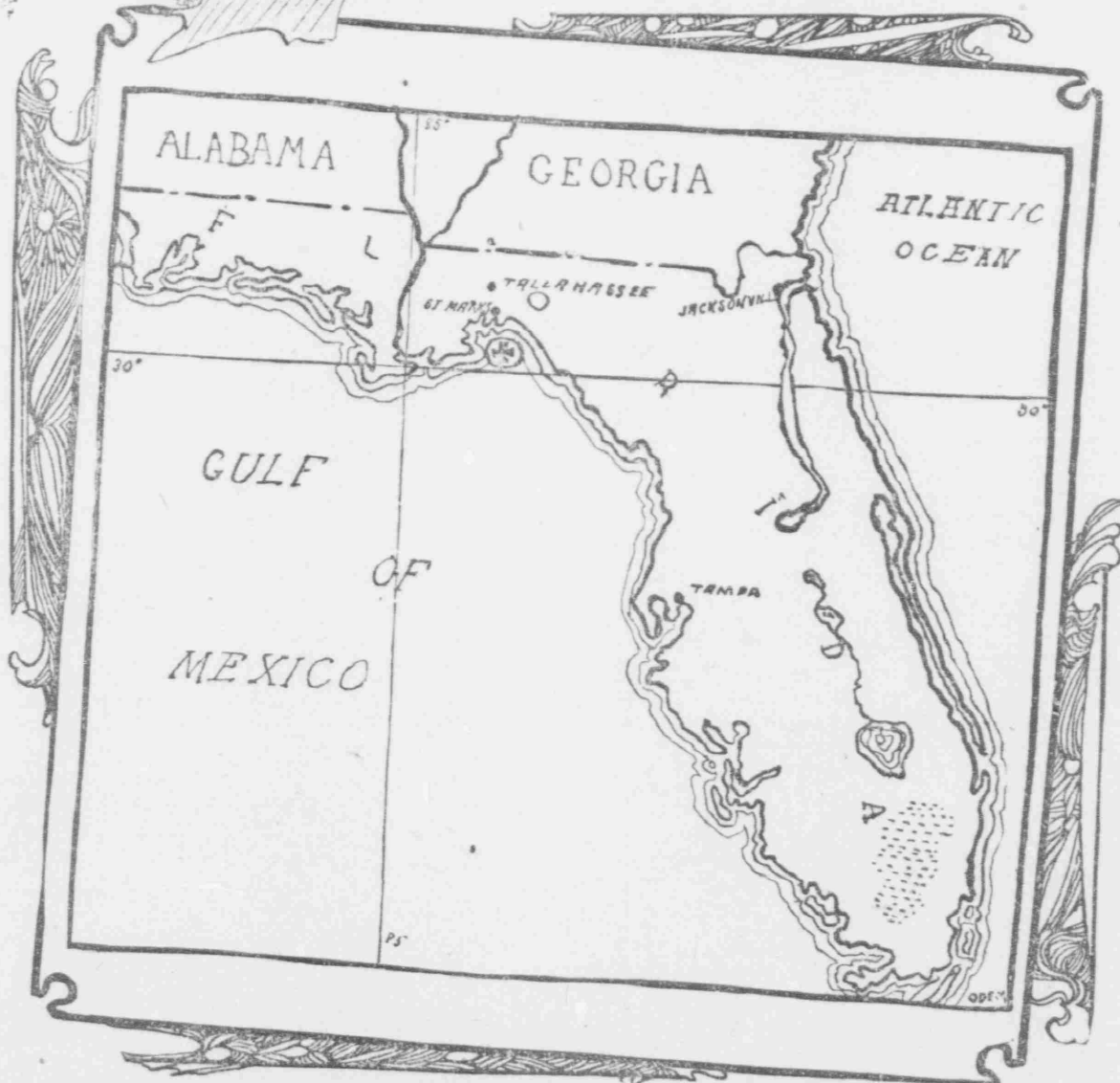
in vain the millions hidden in the marshes of St. Marks. That it lies there, few who have heard the story from those who lived there in those days can doubt. Various expeditions have been secretly fitted out to search for it, even in recent years.

One party composed of George

and Mr. Hall—have at different times sought to locate this "treasure of St. Marks." The more recent searchers have met with a formidable obstacle in the shape of a quicksand which is forming just where it is believed that the treasure is buried. It has been necessary to wall up the excavation with lumber and keep a pump going to keep out the water while they worked.

Of late years, because of this in-

creasing difficulty the search has been abandoned. But there be many in that part of Florida who believe implicitly in the existence of that glittering hoard, and who dream dreams o' nights of how they may rescue from the quicksand and take unto themselves and their heirs and assigns forever the five millions of good red gold, of the coinage of about 1820, which they firmly believe is hidden within a few miles of the ruins of old San Marco de Apalachee.



Map Showing the Spot Where the Gold Was Buried.

A year or two after the death of Smith, there drifted into port at St. Marks, a bit of human wreckage, a sailor named Ballou. He was an old man, and of very secretive habits. He fitted out a boat, bought picks, axes, spades, and supplies and disappeared. At intervals he would return for supplies. When his funds were exhausted he taught school during the winter, hoarding his earnings like a miser, and spending them for supplies for his trips in the summer.

Finally, exhausted from labor and the hardships he had endured, Ballou became ill and died at the military hospital at St. Marks.

One of the Old Crew

From his papers it was learned that he was a survivor of the crew of the Spanish gunboat that sailed from New Orleans with the five millions from Spain. A facsimile chart of the one Bell had was found among his papers.

Since that day many have sought

Ladd, a son of Daniel Ladd; Swamp Angel Bill Denham, Castillo, Bryant and Kennedy, fitted out a boat and went in search of the gold. They all got drunk, one of the party thought he had located the money; but they got into a fight over the probable division and had to go back to St. Marks for repairs and could never again find the place.

Several other men, well known in that part of the country—among them the late Colonel Slusser and Mr. George Lamb, Mr. Register,

The Men Who Really Give the Bookies a Jolt

(Continued from Second Page.)

The father of John A. Drake was F. M. Drake, one time governor of Iowa and railroad president. John A.'s English racing experiences followed his being ordered abroad for rest in 1899. Next season the horses in his improvised racing stable won fifty-two races, more than the horses owned by any other foreigner had won in a single season down to that time. He is said to have won \$400,000 in five weeks, a big enough story for all practical purposes, if the figures were of half the magnitude.

There never was quite so much money thrown away every day as now, because there never was any such wealth before. All the same the present is without any really picturesque spendthrift of worldwide fame. The man with an income of \$25,000 who spends \$50,000 is a genuine spendthrift; the man who spends ten times as much or half a million out of an income of \$500,000 is no spendthrift at all. The present best known close approach to the spendthrift of other days is Count Paul de Castellane, whose career as a money burner seems to have been closed, summarily, by his wife's action for divorce.

Harry Thaw, who killed Stanford White, has his own record as a money spender, too, but he was never able to make way with his capital for his income was restricted, and so he would hardly come under the spendthrift classification as above.

Possibly the most picturesque spendthrift reported in the United States within the last decade or so was a tall, handsome Russian, whose name no one seemed to know for sure, but which was variously printed as Ledman and Tedman. He is said to have located about twenty years ago at Liano, a "way back Texas town. There he wasted \$12,000 a month for a year or two, not a difficult thing in a metropolis or capital, but almost impossible there.

Among other ways of getting rid of his cash this chap is said to have adopted the plan of smoking only one cigarette in each box he opened, throwing the remainder away; of paying a dollar for each box and taking no change, of giving cattle and provisions to anybody who would take them, of presenting pianos to school children in dozen lots, etc. One report tells how he built the finest saloon Texas ever knew, named it Satan's Gate and gave away the receipts. He also, it is re-

ported, began to build a palace of vast extent and fabulous splendor, but died of too much beer when the structure was one-fifth completed.

Nobody ever really knew who he was, but there were dark hints of royal birth and of exile, but no affidavits have been brought forward to prove that the chap ever really existed.

Among authenticated American spendthrifts, John W. Steele, "Coal Oil Johnny," is the most famous. His half forgotten history was brought to the front again last January when he was reported to be dying. At that time, as often had been the case in previous years, many stories of his exploits, as apocryphal as the entire story of Ledman or Tedman may have been, were told.

These stories account for the spending of a million or more in a few months; Steele's own statement is that he spent rather more than \$60,000, \$30,000 of which was cash, while a somewhat larger figure was debt. His period of riotous living covered seven months in 1882; the source of the money he burned was an oil farm near Franklin, Pa., left to him by his foster mother, a Mrs. McClintock, who was burned to death by the explosion of a can of kerosene, and his petition in bankruptcy was filed in February, 1883, the sum of his debts being \$32,739.

He appears to have been a rather "cheap skate" at the best, but he surely did eat a dash in Philadelphia, where, curiously enough, he went to spend his money. There is a story that he leased a hotel for a day and kept open house, that he bought a carriage and after riding in it half a mile presented it to the driver, but he denies both, and, as told, the stories lack verisimilitude. He did become the angel of a minstrel troupe, however, and traveled with them for a while, but he didn't take them about the country in a special train. As a spendthrift today "Coal Oil Johnny" would count for little enough. He wouldn't be "in it" with "Scotty," the owner of the alleged mysterious gold mine, who made a record-breaking railroad trip across the continent a year or two ago, but "Coal Oil Johnny" will be a household word for many years to come, while half the people you meet have already forgotten all about Scotty.

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